



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Electronic Monitoring Systems for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS)

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Adrienne Thomas, PRA Officer, NOAA, 151 Patton Avenue, Room 159, Asheville, NC 28801 (or at PRAComments@doc.gov). All comments received are part of the public record. Comments will generally be posted without change. All Personally Identifiable Information (for example, name and address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument and instructions should be directed to Ian Miller, phone 301-427-8503, or email ian.miller@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and other electronic monitoring systems collect important information on fishing effort, catch, and the geographic location of fishing effort and catch for certain sectors of the Atlantic HMS fleet. Data collected through these systems are used in both domestic and international fisheries management, including for law enforcement, stock assessments, and quota management purposes. Atlantic HMS vessels required to use VMS are pelagic longline, purse seine, bottom longline (directed shark permit holders in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia), and gillnet (directed shark permit holders consistent with the requirements of the Atlantic large whale take reduction plan requirements at 50 CFR 229.39.(h)) vessels. In addition to VMS, pelagic longline vessels are also required to have electronic monitoring systems to monitor catch and account for bluefin tuna interactions.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Law Enforcement monitors fleet adherence to gear- and time-area restrictions with VMS position location data. Gear restricted areas and time-area closures are important tools for Atlantic HMS management that have been implemented to reduce bycatch of juvenile swordfish, sea turtles, and bluefin tuna, among other species. Electronic monitoring data from the pelagic longline fleet are used by NMFS to accurately monitor bluefin tuna catch by the pelagic longline fleet, to ensure compliance with Individual Bluefin Quota (IBQ) limits and requirements, and to ensure that the Longline category bluefin tuna quota is not over-harvested. Additionally, electronic monitoring is used to verify disposition of retained shortfin mako sharks, consistent with binding international agreements. VMS reporting of bluefin tuna catch is used to monitor IBQ

allocations in real-time.

Atlantic HMS fisheries are managed under the dual authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Atlantic Tunas Conservation Act (ATCA). Under the MSA, management measures must be consistent with ten National Standards, and fisheries must be managed to maintain optimum yield, rebuild overfished fisheries, and prevent overfishing. Under ATCA, the Secretary of Commerce shall promulgate regulations, as necessary and appropriate, to implement measures adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

II. Method of Collection

First-time VMS respondents must install a VMS unit and submit an activation checklist to NMFS via mail. Hail-out, hail-in, hourly position reports, and bluefin tuna catch reports must be submitted to NMFS electronically via the VMS communication system. First-time electronic monitoring respondents must have an electronic monitoring system installed by a NMFS contractor. Electronic monitoring data must be submitted after each pelagic longline trip via mail.

III. Data

OMB Control Number: 0648-0372.

Form Number(s): None.

Type of Review: Regular submission.

Affected Public: Business or other for-profit organizations

Estimated Number of Respondents: 311.

Estimated Time Per Response: 4 hours for initial VMS installation; 5 minutes per VMS

initial activation checklist; 2 minutes per hail-out/hail-in declaration; 6 hours for initial electronic monitoring installation; 5 minutes for pelagic longline bluefin tuna catch records; 15 minutes for purse seine bluefin tuna catch records; 1 minute for dockside review of bluefin tuna catch records; 2 hours for electronic monitoring data retrieval.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 6,420.

Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public: \$422,329.

IV. Request for Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden (including hours and cost) of the proposed collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval of this information collection; they also will become a matter of public record.

Sheleen Dumas,

Departmental Lead PRA Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Commerce Department.

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